

# EXHIBIT 14

**Thorsten Kiefer**



December 31, 2020

The Honorable Frederic Block  
United States District Judge Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Re: John Simonlacaj

Dear Judge Block,

I am writing this as a personal reference for my friend and former colleague, John Simonlacaj, and to urge leniency in his sentencing.

I have known John for more than seven years as my colleague at HFZ. My role at HFZ was Director of Design and I directly reported to John. In a very fast-growing environment, he has been nothing but a leader to help execute the projects and help the team to focus on the success on any of the daily complexities. He has been nothing but a generous and caring leader to the entire team which reported to him, with the sole purpose of allowing all of us to succeed in our roles. He had an open-door policy at work – probably the only way to handle the amount of people who needed advice and direction. Despite that level of stress, he always was able to put a smile on people's faces and put things into a larger perspective. He made people comfortable and he always understood that a healthy compromise is most often the appropriate solution.

Though I am aware of and acknowledge John's legal situation, I would like to stress that he always had been a positive presence in any professional situation and has been a caring husband and father to his three children. I was lucky to get to know his wife Drita and his children Nik, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. He has been nothing but a loving father, always there for his children – if it was for Nik's college times or [REDACTED] endeavors to pursue her singing career, he would finish the conversation or assign the task and jet off to be there for his family as loving and caring father. He is a man with a strong faith, which must have given him another anchor in his very engaged life. I understand that the Sunday morning church is a weekly routine for him.

John's legal situation is certainly unfortunate and disappointing – but also surprising from my perspective. I wish to reiterate my request for leniency in John's sentencing so that he may put behind him a regrettable episode and can be the positive and caring person I got to know.

Thank you very much for your consideration – please don't hesitate to reach out if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Thorsten Kiefer